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A
SERMON

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

OF

Mr. *Samuel Hollis,*

Preached *May* the 24th 1724.

By JEREMIAH HUNT. *K*

L O N D O N :

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SERMON

DEATH

Mr. & Mrs. Holmes



Preached at the British Museum

By JEREMIAH HUNT

LONDON

Printed for S. H. & J. at the Office of the
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T O

Mr. JOHN and Mrs. HOLLIS.

IT is at your request that the following DISCOURSE was first preach'd, and now appears in publick. The occasion of it, the death of so desirable a son, is very melancholy. I shall not (as is usual) mention every circumstance which might aggravate your loss : a method, in my sentiment, no way prudent ; since hereby the passion of sorrow (which, as well as other affections, christians ought to regulate) rises too high, and becomes immoderate ; and your grief, I am sure, needs no such heightenings.

IT is with pleasure that I see you bear so considerable a loss with such patience, and in a manner so becoming the profession of the christian religion. You know that your heavenly Father does every thing in wise goodness. We are not capable indeed of seeing into the reasons of his conduct ; and no wonder, when we have so little

little a compass of the knowledge of this world, or the relation that it bears to another.

THE following DISCOURSE has those things added in the printing of it, ~~which time would not allow me to deliver~~ when I preach'd it. That it may be of great service to promote the practice of religion in all, and particularly in your children, who all happily stand well-dispos'd to piety and virtue, is the hearty and sincere prayer of

Your friend

and servant,

J. AVANT.

It is with pleasure that I see you bear a considerable and a laudable part in the Christian religion. You know that your heavenly Father does every thing in the best manner. We are not capable of seeing into the reason of his conduct, and no wonder, when we have so little

ECCLES.

ECCLES. XII. i.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THE design of this book is to shew us the force that each object of our pursuit has to render us happy. It is compos'd by one, who wanted not skill to make just remarks, and had in his power every circumstance to fit him for it; who was remarkable for wisdom, a great and powerful king over a rich and flourishing people, in a state of publick peace, and resolv'd to use the utmost variety of tryals in the enquiry. On these accounts it cannot but appear highly reasonable, that persons of every age (whether young or old) should carefully regard what such an one may offer to serious reflection.

In the preceding chapter * he addresses to the young man: *Rejoice O young man*

* Ver. 9.

in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Which words are capable of being explain'd, either as a *permission* under the restraint of a firm persuasion that there will be a future judgment: which interpretation the scope of the place, the greek translation, and the phrases *rejoice and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth* *, seem to favour: or as a fine piece of *raillery*, to which the expressions *walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes*, incline, since they are generally us'd in a bad sense. Which soever of these two meanings be the justest, it is undeniably clear, that the wise man intends to reduce to proper bounds the pleasures of sense, which youth are most strongly dispos'd to, and peculiarly fitted for, by a consideration of the strict account we must all give to God of our behaviour. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart* †. Suppress fierceness, rage, sadness, fretting, and vexation (when any thing crosses thee) with all such like perturbations of mind, to which, thro the heat of thy blood, thou art particularly ex-

* Ver. 7, 8.

† Ver. 10.

pos'd. *And put away evil from thy flesh :* let no impure desires, which are strong in that age, stay with thee. *For childhood and youth are vanity.* For the first dawn of life, by early and unexperienc'd pleasures of this world, is liable to great hazards, and (if they are escap'd) presently passes away, and vanishes. *And remember thy Creator.*

A N D or therefore remember, not remember now, immediately and without delay : for tho that is our duty, and highly reasonable ; yet such a sense suits not the original *. By remembering God or our Creator, we may understand the whole of a religious life, since 'tis usual in scripture to represent religion by some main principle, or eminent part of it. Thus the knowledge, fear, love of God, and trust in him, are us'd to express our whole duty ; and that remembering our Creator in the text, is to be understood in the same manner, appears probable, since the opposite to it is us'd to describe the irreligious and wicked. *So are the paths of all that forget God †. The wicked shall be turn'd into hell, and all the nations that forget God ‡. The wicked thro the pride of his countenance*

* וְכָרַח

† Job 8. 13.

‡ Psalm 9. 17.

*will not seek after God; * God is not in all his thoughts.*

REMEMBER thy Creator in the days of thy youth: in thy early and best days, when thy spirits are most lively and vigorous, when religious exercises will be most easy, and attended with the highest satisfaction; not deferring this remembrance till old age come upon thee, when thy life will become a burden, and thy days of darkness shall be many †.

IN discoursing farther on these words, I shall observe the following method.

I. I SHALL give you a short view of Religion, or describe the whole of a religious life, which is here recommended by the expression of *remembering our Creator*.

II. SHew you the fitness of representing the whole of our duty by *remembering our Creator*, especially if we consider the connexion of the words with the preceding verse,

* Psal. 10. 4,

† Eccles. 11. 8,

III. I SHALL make it appear that young persons are oblig'd to Religion, and that the time of youth is the fittest and most proper to engage in a religious course of life, or which is the same thing to *remember our Creator*. And then,

IV. CONCLUDE with suitable Application.

I. I SHALL endeavour to set before you a short view of religion, or describe the whole of a religious life, recommended to us here by the expression of *remembering our Creator*.

To settle right notions of *obligation* and *duty*, 'tis necessary to consider our make, the relation we stand in to other beings around us, and the present state wherein we are plac'd.

WE find that we are endued with powers of forming ideas, and comparing them one with another, of determining and acting, and so are free ; or in other words, that we are intelligent, capable of seeing the reason and proportion of things, and of acting consistently therewith, or the contrary.

trary. Hereby we are fitted to discern the difference of actions, and distinguish good and evil. We observe further, that this conscious principle which is generally call'd *mind*, and in which the several powers we have before mention'd reside, is united to a body skilfully form'd; in consequence whereof arise to our experience, sensations, appetites, and passions. And as the *mind* is capable of apprehending the designs and ends for which they are plac'd in our frame, viz. to continue and secure our nature, and render us active, it clearly appears that the power of reflection is given us to direct and conduct them in such manner, as may best suit their being fixt in our make; and when they are thus manag'd, a true pleasure results from the exercise of them: on the contrary, when they are disproportionate to their design, when they swell high, and become exorbitant; as the order of things is hereby disturb'd, so the consequences are darkness, slavery, and uneasiness of mind. From these considerations the *obligation to self-government* takes its rise.

WHEN we look around, as we find a variety of beings below us, which are adapted to our make, and fitted to supply our wants, and impart delight; so there are many

many of the same order and frame as ourselves, possess'd with like powers, and having the same claims in consistence with the nature of things, to which we are all equally oblig'd to attend. Hence arises an obligation to *justice and equity*, or in other words, to do to others as we wou'd (consistently with the reason of things) that they shou'd do to us in like circumstances. We remark farther, that there is naturally a strong bent in us to society, to which the present state of things, and our own make invite.

WHEN man had corrupted his ways, and great disorders were introduc'd, it became fit and necessary that coercive power should be instituted to punish vices, which have a malign influence on mankind; to secure human rights, and bring about social happiness; and from hence arise many obligations agreeable to the different characters which are sustained. Besides, when sin enter'd into the world, distempers and pain, sickness and death ensued; which make compassion and all suitable offices of goodness, to be fit and congruous to the present state of things, that is, to be *duties*. Now whenever a person is steddily dispos'd to regard and practise according to these *obligations*, he then comes under the character of *virtuous*,

uous, and the duties themselves are virtues.

If we survey the beings which surround us, we shall be reduc'd necessarily to own a Being that is eternal; and the traces of design, which clearly appear in the system of things, especially in such of them as are incapable of designing in their own nature, and yet constantly carry on proper ends, unavoidably lead us to apprehend that that eternal Being is wise, and powerful, and good, and the cause of our beautiful and regular structure. Hence spring up new obligations arising from the capacities of our nature, and the relation we stand into this Being, whom we call God; such as contemplation, love, reverence, praise, prayer, trust, imitation, patience, and obedience. And when these are practis'd in the general course of our lives, and the other before nam'd comply'd with, from a regard to him, who is the Author of the constitution of things, out of which they naturally result, then we become properly religious.

If that goodness, which gave rise to the Creation, should move the first cause to reveal his will to us in a way different from the nature of things, as 'tis reasonable to apprehend that he will attend it with suitable

table evidence ; so it is fit that we entertain it, and yield to the influence that he designs it should have upon us. And since, in the last age, he has sent his Son to open to us with the greatest clearness and fulness, all the instances of duty which arise from the nature of things, adopting them into the institution of the Messiah ; and in order to induce our compliance, has given us in him a perfect example, unveil'd the invisible world, and brought life and immortality to light, assur'd us of the assistances of the Spirit, exhibited a perfect sacrifice, and made us acquainted with an available intercession to encourage our return, and wisely appointed that we should serve him thro this glorious Mediator, to give the greater force to the whole plan : since, I say, this is the present state of things with regard to us, we cannot be religious as christians without faith in this doctrine, and unless we are thereby effectually prevail'd with to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, the grand design of christianity*, and without which we can't attain the happiness therein promis'd, and by which alone the grace of the gospel becomes to us in effect the *instrument of God to salvation*. I proceed now,

II. To shew you the fitness of representing the whole of our duty by *remembering our Creator*, especially if we consider the connexion of the words with the preceding verses.

By *remembering our Creator* we are to understand, not only a persuasion that there is a God, who is wise, and powerful, and good; the Author and Original of the world, and the various beings which are in it; but a constant and fixt attention, and regard to him as such, attended with a suitable practice. While we thus consider him as *Creator*, we can't but look upon him as the source, and cause of that *constitution* of things, out of which arise the dutys we before describ'd; and clearly see by the capacities he has communicated to us, that 'tis his pleasure we should trace them out, and carefully conform to them, which, when we do, we commence *religious*. Besides, in the word *Creator* is included a right to give us what laws he pleases, and that we are as his creatures oblig'd to observe them, when they are discover'd, and made known to us. So that to remember our *Creator* in the sense of the wise man, is the same thing as to be religious in our temper
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and conduct, and consequently religion is thereby fully represented. Which will farther appear, if we consider the words in the connexion they stand into the preceding verses. *Solomon* * applys to the young man; *Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

THE goodness which creation or giving being implys, would lead us to apprehend, that the common Parent of all would not abandon the workmanship of his hand; but that he would direct, and guide each part of it, and particularly concern himself about his reasonable creatures, who are alone capable of proper government, and for whose sake other beings are created; and that he would distinguish by his favour those, who comply with the design of their make, from others who act the reverse to it, in such manner, as may be a sufficient inforcement to his law; and since it does not appear to be the case in this life, it becomes highly probable that there will be a day of retribution in another. These things may with

* Chap. II. 9.

great appearance of probability be reason'd from the consideration of God, and the nature of things; but when a divine revelation expressly asserts a future judgment, and we are assur'd in so many words that for *all these things* God will bring us to an account, and that *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;* and when in the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, the affair to us becomes certain, and all doubts concerning it immediately vanish. This then makes it indisputably clear, that *remembering our Creator* is a fit way of describing the whole of religion, when that remembrance stands thus related to God as a judge, and so comprehends in it his taking notice of our actions, and his determination to bring us to a strict account for them; which is a powerful motive at all times, and in every place, to a religious disposition, and life, with uprightness and constancy. I come now to the third head,

III. THAT young persons are oblig'd to religion, and that the time of youth is the fittest and most proper, to engage in a religious course of life, or which is the same thing, to remember our Creator.

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WE are oblig'd to the *practice of religion* as soon as our understandings open, and discover an actual capacity of distinguishing good and evil (discerning the congruity of the one, and the unsuitableness of the other) and of apprehending, by an easy proof from the things which are seen, that there is a God, the first Cause, and Creator of all things, who expects that we should act in a manner agreeable to our reasonable nature, and the relation we stand in to other beings, so as to become easy and happy to ourselves, and useful and beneficial to others. When this precisely begins, 'tis not possible to determine. All persons have not like abilities, nor the same advantages of early and wise instruction. 'Tis however plain, whenever such religious capacity springs up, religious obligation arises too, and in answerable proportion.

THE powers of the mind (as of the body) gain strength by use, and attain a due force, and proper compass : whence results an obligation to cultivate and improve them. By experience our apprehensions become clearer, and we see with greater ease, and distinctness, the duties which arise from the relation we stand in to God, and others, and the reasons upon which their practice is founded.

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And I doubt not but every one will readily agree, that such a time is the fittest for the practice of religion, and attended with the greatest advantages. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

THEN is the *propereſt time* to ſet about any thing in good earneſt, and with the greateſt application, when the powers are moſt lively, and vigorous ; when the difficulties which are likely to ariſe to obſtruct the execution of it, are feweſt, and moſt eaſily conquer'd ; when the performance will certainly, in ſeveral reſpects, be more perfect, and the ſatisfaction reſulting from it greater. On all which accounts it will appear, that youth is the beſt time for entering on a religious courſe of life.

THE powers both of mind and body at that time are moſt *lively and vigorous* ; the conception clear, the imagination brisk, the memory ſtrong, the reſolution animated, and the executive powers in their full vigor. Can there be any fitter ſeaſon aſſign'd for religious practice, and remembering our Creator, than when the faculties whereby we become capable thereof, and
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which are given us for that very purpose; are in their highest and most perfect state? Is there the least colour of reason, why the proper business of these powers should be put off and defer'd, till they grow languid and decay; when they shall be greatly unfit for it: especially if we consider that the concerns of religion are so important and necessary, that our present and future happiness depends upon them?

THAT youth is the fittest time for engaging in a religious course of life, farther appears from the consideration, that the *difficulties*, which are likely to arise to hinder the practice of religion, are *fewest* in that age, and most easily conquer'd. It is true indeed, some difficulties there are which must be acknowledg'd to attend that age, and which proceed from gaiety of temper, high relish of the pleasures of sense, and sudden rise of passions, producing too great attachment to sensible objects, inconsiderateness and want of attention, rashness, and impatience as well of advice as restraint; and those difficulties (generally speaking) are in a greater or less degree, as the education has been more or less wise, and religious. The youth, whose pious education has been attended with the blessing of God, meets with no difficulties in a religious course,
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in comparison with those, who for a long tract of time have engag'd in a vicious life, and have contracted strong and inveterate habits; the force of which is thus strongly describ'd by the prophet: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may they also do good that are accustom'd to do evil* *. A young and tender plant readily takes the ply, which he who tends it, thinks proper to give; and if by accident it becomes warp'd, and has receiv'd a wrong bent, by due and early care 'tis easily reduc'd; but if it be suffer'd to continue for a considerable time without suitable attendance, and grow old, it becomes stubborn, and inflexible.

THE *practice* of religion by persons who are young, and in their full vigor, is certainly in several respects more *perfect*. The gay scene of life, when regarded as the effect of divine bounty, in the age wherein 'tis most sensibly relish'd, must give peculiar spirit, and remarkable vigor to the grateful tribute of praise, which is offer'd up to so bounteous a Creator. When the youthful heart is greatly chear'd by the variety of innocent pleasures, which external objects are adapted to impart, and carefully

* Jer. 13. 23.

considers that they all spring from a profusion of goodness in the first Cause, the desire of imitating that amiable character (to which capacity obliges) must be proportionably strong and effectual; especially when heighten'd by a due reflection on the most amazing instance of divine favour, the invaluable gift of his only begotten Son, who dy'd to obtain for us the enjoyment of lasting, and endless happiness, and has expressly commanded us to be perfect, *as our Father who is in heaven is perfect* *, to be followers of God as dear children, and to walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour* †.

WILL not the devotion of the religious youth be as lively and vigorous, as his sense is of the goodness of God, which excites it? And since in that age the impression that divine favours make, is more penetrating, will not the resolution to act in every respect conformably to the will of so kind and beneficent a Being, be answerably sprightly, and active? And if this be allow'd, it plainly follows, that religion is then best practis'd, and that the days of our youth are our best and choicest days to remember our Creator.

* Matth. 5. 48.

† Ephes. 5. 1, 2.

THIS farther appears, in that the *satisfaction* and *pleasure*, which arise from a religious life, in that age prove stronger. The pleasure, which results from actions, springs either from the agreeableness of the objects to the faculty, or from the vigor of the active powers in the performance, or from the beauty, ease and excellency of the actions, or from the happy fruits which arise from them. And if all meet, and are eminently found in early piety and virtue, then the satisfaction, which arises from *remembering our Creator in the days of our youth*, must be peculiar and distinguish'd.

SUCH is the goodness of our Maker, that he has connected a sense of pleasure with that use of our powers, which is regular and agreeable to their design; and when they are so conducted by clear views of an enlighten'd mind, the satisfaction must rise high, and bear a proportion to their sprightliness and vigor. Which will be farther increas'd by considering, that the opposition which he is to encounter with, is comparatively small, and the difficulties (whatever they are) in time will greatly abate and lessen; that there is all the reason in the world to expect the peculiar favour and acceptance of God, thro the great Redeemer, and that he shall continue and persevere in a
religious

religious course, by the divine assistance, and thro' grace receive a proportionate reward in a future state.

By all these reflections it appears undeniably clear, that there are many advantages which attend remembering our Creator in the days of our youth, and that *that* is the fittest time to enter upon a religious course of life. I proceed now.

IV. To conclude with suitable application.

By this discourse, let such who have the care of instructing youth in the principles, and practice of religion, be reminded to take the method which is most natural, and most agreeable to the reason of things. Religion is founded in reasonable nature, and consists in being steddily dispos'd to act always conformably to the will of God, whether it be discover'd by the *constitution* of things, or by *revelation*. And since our intellectual powers by slow degrees open and enlarge, it becomes all such (whose province is to teach) to follow nature, and instruct the young first in those things, which are most plain and obvious, as the difference of actions, and distinction of good

and evil, the conveniences and inconveniences which attend the one and the other, which may admit of illustrations easy and suited to their age: and then by inuring them to observe the fitnesses of things one to another, the sun to give light, and the eye to receive pleasures arising from it, the earth to produce fruits, and the fruits thereof to preserve man and beast, and the like; and by remarking to them, that these have no consciousness of their own subserviency to the perfection of the whole, to lead them to the acknowledgment of a first, wise, powerful, and good Being, who is the Creator and Governor of all things, whose pleasure they should endeavour to know, in order to comply with it, and whose favour they ought to be desirous of obtaining by all proper methods. By proper methods, I say, since they will soon be inclin'd to find out many inventions, and introduce what is fanciful in their religion, unless carefully guarded, and frequently taught that nothing is to be look'd upon as truly religious, and acceptable to God, but what is recommended by him either in the nature and reason of things, or in his revelation; and that every thing is to be regarded in the same views, order, and importance wherein he represents it. Afterwards as the understanding comes to be enlarg'd, the proof of revelation, particularly

ticularly of the christian doctrine, should largely and fully be open'd, and the wisdom of the whole plan discover'd, the consistence of each part with the perfections of God, and its suitableness to carry on its *design*, should be represented, as it is clearly express'd by the apostle *Paul*, and strongly urg'd by the most powerful motive: *For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appear'd to all men, Gentiles and Jews, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort**.

2. FROM this argument give me leave to recommend to you a religious course of life. To be religious, and remember our Creator, is the same thing; and when *Solomon* exhorts to the one, he is suppos'd to recommend the other. 'Tis therefore the proper improvement of the text to press you to engage sincerely and constantly in a

* Tit. 2. 11, 12, 13, 14.

religious course, and to make continual advances in it. To this purpose consider, that you are indebted to God for your being, and the continuance of it, and all the good you enjoy; and is it not highly dissingenuous and ungrateful to forget *him*, in whom you live and move, and from whose kind hand your wants are supply'd, and whose wise goodness has suited the external objects to your several powers, from whence result the very pleasures which (thro your guilty management) have so unhappy an influence upon you as to make you unmindful of him?

REFLECT that he has for this design communicated to you reasonable natures, that you might be capable of religion, and actually engage in the pursuit of it; and can there be any thing more monstrous, than to defeat the intention of our kind Creator, in imparting to us intelligent natures, as far as lies in the compass of our power? Is it not the dignity of our make, that we are fitted for the service of God, and capable of resembling him? And the more noble and excellent any thing is, the more criminal and vile it is, in the general esteem of mankind, to debase and abuse it. Oh, to how mean and abject drudgeries are the *minds*, which are regardless of God and religion, unhappily subjected!

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CONSIDER farther, has he not as thy *Creator* a right to give thee laws? And since in a most perfect and happy Being, goodness alone could be the motive to create or impart existence, art thou not by this reflection secure, beyond the possibility of doubting, that his laws must be design'd, suitably to the present circumstances of things, to make happy? Wilt thou not therefore, when thou disregardest them, be found acting cruelly to thyself, as well as ungratefully and rebelliously toward thy great *Creator*, and constant *Benefactor*? Has not the *Maker* of all things in much goodness contriv'd, that the steady and constant practice of those laws, which arise out of the frame of things, and so are of eternal obligation, and which are the most essential part of a religious life, for bringing us to which all other discoveries of his pleasure are design'd; has he not, I say, order'd it in wise goodness, that compliance with *them* should be attended with the real perfection, proper happiness, and true freedom of our nature, and that the contrary to these should result from the neglect and violation of them? Has he not hereby clearly discover'd his will, and enforc'd our compliance? And when we are sensible that what we are thus steadily dispos'd to act, is agreeable

to the mind of our kind Creator, have we not this further satisfaction (besides that which arises from the settled course of things) that we are secure of the divine favour and approbation, and that if he does not think fit to distinguish us in the present life, he will proportionably in a future? If then religion is but a becoming tribute of gratitude to God our common Parent; if the practice of it is the intention of the first Cause in giving us reasonable powers; if the capacity of engaging in it is the proper and peculiar excellence of our nature; if our gracious and rightful Sovereign has made our present and future happiness greatly to depend upon it, have we not the most powerful motives to induce us to a constant and vigorous prosecution of a religious disposition and life?

ADD to all these, that tho every one who neglects religion, which is the proper business of reasonable creatures, will be found at last without excuse; yet such as are favour'd with the most perfect revelation of the divine will (as christians undoubtedly are) will be render'd entirely inexcusable. Have we not the greatest encouragements, and strongest arguments to a religious life, set before us in the doctrine of our Saviour? Are not all the instances of

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our duty, and the views from which they are to be practis'd clearly and fully discover'd? And lest we should mistake in the application of the rules given us to direct our conduct, have we not the brightest and most unspotted pattern, which we may constantly endeavour to imitate without the least danger of being misled? Has not the gospel consulted the exigence of our guilty and fallen state, by discovering to us the way of pardon and acceptance, *thro the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* *? Are we not hereby encourag'd sincerely to repent, and amend our lives? Are we not animated to constancy and perseverance in a religious course, when we are assur'd in this institution, that every slip or failure does not put us out of the divine favour and acceptance; and that no sin will make our condition desperate, unless we are resolv'd to continue in the practice of it, and not undo it (as far as is possible) by a sincere and hearty repentance? We are indeed in a state of great difficulty and temptation, but have we not the highest reason to expect success in our honest pursuit of a religious temper and life, by all the means God has wisely appointed, when the gospel expressly promises the continual aids and assistances of the

* Rom. 3. 24.

Spirit, and in a due proportion to the variety of trials which attend us in this life? And is there not the greatest vigor given to such a pursuit, by the clear views that the doctrine of our Saviour opens to our minds, on the one hand, of *the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness**, and on the other, of *eternal life to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*†? Does not the christian religion expressly declare, that he (God) *hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordain'd; whereof he hath given assurance, in that he hath rais'd him from the dead*‡? Now shall we christians, who have so great and such peculiar advantages for the practice of religion, neglect to walk in the paths of real piety and virtue? God forbid. *How shall we escape***? Of *how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall such be thought worthy?* Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip ††.

* Rom. 1. 18.

† Rom. 2. 7.

‡ Acts 17. 31.

** Heb. 2. 3.

†† Chap. 10. 9.

3. THIS subject recommends *early* piety and virtue. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*, in thy best and choicest days. To this purpose consider how disingenuous 'tis to sacrifice to criminal and sensual gratifications the best of thy days, and defer the service of thy great Benefactor till thy strength abates, and the vigor and sprightliness of thy powers lessen. Is not religion an affair that must some time or other be done, if we would not be unhappy; and can we attempt it at any time with equal advantage, as in the time of our youth, when not only our powers are most lively, but when we are freest from a wrong byass, and lie most open to the impression of religious principles; and of the motives, by which the practice that is suitable to such principles, is recommended and press'd? Seriously reflect that ill and vicious habits are soon contracted, and are deeply rooted in proportion to the length of the time, wherein they have been settling in us: and if these are to be master'd by us (as undoubtedly they must, or we shall certainly be undone) carefully consider what labour and toil, sorrow and uneasiness, difficulty and struggle must necessarily attend the effectual unravelling of them: and inasmuch as they are fix'd by frequent

acts, and often by a considerable tract of time, they are not to be eradicated all at once; the force of them will frequently return, and endanger a relapse, and a defeat of resolutions seemingly strong; and the consequence of such a relapse is, that the case becomes more hazardous, the objects which occasion'd the bad habits, are return'd to with greater eagerness, proportionate to the uneasiness and impatience of the former restraint, by which the habits gain deeper root, and the reasons, which should excite the resolution against them, lose their influence: And so the unhappy person is likely to go on till the evil days come, when he shall be too much enfeebled to relish even his vices, and consequently by far too weak to conquer his propensities to them, and attain the contrary dispositions, unless the divine Being should work a miracle in his favour; and this he has no reason to expect, who has wilfully delay'd *remembering* him till his faculties are broken, and he has hardly any memory left, in opposition to the clear conviction of his duty, and the great assistances of grace afforded to him.

BUT if we suppose the case not to be so bad, and that there is no such relapse, yet, where considerable habits of vice are contracted

tracted (as there must be in proportion to the delay of engaging in a religious course) such inequalities will attend their practice of piety and virtue, as will greatly weaken their hopes, and lessen their expectation of future glory.

ON the contrary; when a religious life is enter'd upon in the dawn of youth, the little bad habits, which may have been contracted before, have no considerable strength, and are easily master'd; and the pleasures which naturally arise from a religious course, are heighten'd by the vigor of their age, and give new life to their resolution of constancy and perseverance: and thus dispositions to the practice of religion gain strength by the divine assistance. And as *they* take root with less resistance, the practice of piety and virtue is in such more equal, and attended with fewer doubts, and a moral security of holding out to the end, (thro the aids of the divine Spirit) and such attain greater perfection than others in performing dutys, not only with less reluctance and more facility, but in the best and most agreeable manner. In consequence of all which, they adorn religion, and strongly recommend it to others with greatest advantage. And since the highest honour is done to God and religion by such, and they
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are more happy in themselves, and beneficial to others, which cannot but be agreeable to the divine goodness, is it not reasonable to apprehend, that they will find his peculiar favour and acceptance? And how great a support will hereby be administer'd to them, in times of trial and affliction, and especially in their last and dying minutes, when the reflection on their well-spent life, and the firmness, as well as justness of their hope of future rewards, thro' the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, will afford the best, and most reviving cordials? *The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away: For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.* Wilt thou not then, o young man, be induc'd by these, and the like considerations, to resolve immediately, and without putting it off one day longer, to engage in a religious course of life, without delaying it another moment, since thou knowest not but sudden and unexpected death may deprive thee of an opportunity? And that such a resolution may be the better conducted, I shall offer the following directions.

INURE your self to constant and frequent retirement, to consider your make, the relation you stand in to God, and others,

thers, and the design of your creation. The return of the pleasures of sense, to which youth are peculiarly prone, dissipates the thoughts, and weakens the mind, and produces that inconsiderateness, which is the unhappy occasion of a growing disregard and dislike to religion. 'Tis likely that such a conduct at first will rather be uneasy than pleasant to you, since there is a difficulty of directing the thoughts aright, till the mind is accustomed to attentive reflection, and it may not be amiss to take such a method as some prudent person may advise to settle the thought and fix the attention. Nothing, however, can be more plain, than that such a procedure (if constantly us'd) will weaken the force that sensible objects have to divert us from religion, render meditation familiar, and be of considerable advantage to us.

LET it be your first care to settle just sentiments of true religion, and the principles from whence the practice of it arises; and be not too hasty in an affair of so great importance, when a mistake here may prove fatal. To this purpose carefully consider the duties which arise out of your reasonable make, and the relation you stand in to God and others; attend to the beautiful structure of this world, and by the traces of wisdom,

wisdom, power, and goodness which appear in it, be led to the acknowledgement of a first intelligent Cause. Study with modesty the perfections which are to be ascrib'd to him; whereby you will easily be induced to believe, that he exercises a providence and government over us, takes notice of our actions, and will call us to an account. Regard these principles as proper to influence to a religious temper and life, without which they cannot be available to our perfection or happiness. Weigh carefully the various arguments, whereby with clearness and strength the truth of the christian revelation may be evinced, that your faith in it may stand upon a solid and firm foundation.

WITH peculiar care settle in your minds the great *design* of christianity, to render us like God in purity and happiness; view every part of the doctrine of Christ, the great Mediator, in this light, whereby the fitness and wisdom of it will clearly appear. Distinguish well between the *means* and the *end* of religion, and guard against extremes, that while you have always in your view the *end*, you may not neglect the use of the *means*, which must be wise, that is, fitted to the end, since they are recommended by our Creator; and while you practise the

the *means*, you may not rest therein without attaining the *end*.

ACCUSTOM your self to frequent reviews of your disposition and behaviour, that guilt may not lie long upon you unobserv'd, and without repenting of it. If you find out any sin you are in most danger of, by proper arguments drawn from scripture, or rather by passages of scripture put together, which are suited to the case, labour to conquer and overcome it.

USE frequent and fervent prayer to God, thro our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would impart to you the constant aids of his Spirit, the promise of which, your experience will soon teach you, is a considerable advantage of the christian religion.

TO conclude, set before your minds the examples of such, who not only are religious, but by reason of their relation to us, and our affection to them, are most likely to influence. Here give me leave to say something of the character of our deceas'd friend:

THE care his tender parents took to form his mind to business and religion, happily succeeded. The knowledge he had

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of religious principles, and his resolution to act agreeably, many in this assembly are well acquainted with. And he was enabled to execute his resolution so well, as to excel most of the religious at his * age, which may be express'd by his friends, without the hazard of flattery. He took care, by reading proper books, to attain a due composure and attention of mind; and with labour settled, by the best writers, just apprehensions of the being and attributes of God, of the distinction of mind and body, of a future state, and the truth of the christian religion. He always express'd a great love to the scripture, and a strong desire to gain its true and genuine sense, which he pursu'd with as much application, as the business wherein he was engag'd, and in which he was always diligent, would admit. He made the knowledge he had attain'd subservient to practice, and was thorowly convinc'd, that the former would not be available to our happiness, unless it influenc'd the latter. His devotion to God was join'd with a careful practice of his duty to others. He was remarkably obedient to his parents, and ready to do all kind offices to his relatives and friends. His behaviour was courteous, and his manner affable;

~~and was always ready to do all kind offices to his relatives and friends.~~

* Aged 24.

and

and on the account of his obliging deportment, he was no sooner known but lov'd: In a word, he was capable of *steady and sincere* friendship. This lovely youth, in the dawn of his days, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, is *immaturely* snatch'd away: but I must correct myself: He was *ripen'd* for the world of happy separate Spirits.

AND now, lest our grief should swell too high and become immoderate, consider, is not God the Creator, and consequently has he not an unalienable right to be the Disposer, of all things? Shall not we patiently and submissively leave him to govern his own world, and dispose (as he thinks fit) of his own creatures? Are not all the blessings we enjoy from him? And if he takes back any, shall we offend him by excessive sorrow? Has he not left us many others, which he also may remove from us, if we displease him by an unsuitable deportment? Have we not all imaginable reason to believe our departed friend is happy in the other world, and shall we immoderately mourn? Is not the future happiness what we as christians profess to make our main design? If he has first reach'd the prize, let us assuage our grief for him, and endeavour by this afflictive providence to grow up to a greater

ter preparation for the other happy state,
that when our Lord returns to raise our bo-
dies, and make them like to his glorious
body, and to reunite them to their exalted
spirits, he may *take us to be for ever
where he is.*



F I N I S.

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